

## APPLICANT FEEDBACK SUMMARY

### 2014 AmeriCorps State and National Grant Competition

Legal Applicant: Teach for America

Application ID: 14ES157135

Program Name: Teach for America-New Mexico

For the purpose of enhancing our programs by improving the quality and quantity of applications to the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), we are providing specific feedback regarding the strengths and weaknesses of this application. These comments are not meant to represent a comprehensive assessment; rather the analysis represents those elements that had the greatest bearing on the rating of the application. Please note that this feedback consists of summary comments from more than one reviewer. For this reason, some of the comments may seem to be inconsistent or contradictory. Comments are not representative of all of the information used in the final funding decision.

#### Reviewers' Summary Comments:

##### Strengths:

The applicant provides local-level data for third grade reading scores and poverty rates to show concerns regarding low educational performance and inequality of outcomes across the state of New Mexico.

The applicant notes high numbers of teacher vacancies in many rural communities that the intervention seeks to serve.

The applicant describes the low levels of student achievement in the state of New Mexico in areas of reading proficiency, graduation rates, and remediation enrollment rates of students who go on to college.

All statistics listed in the narrative are cited using recent and relevant sources.

Relevant and current reports/studies provide strong documentation of the problem/need.

The need to strengthen educational outcomes for targeted students is well articulated and documented.

An emphasis on rectifying educational inequities is given.

The applicant provides descriptive statistical information on poverty, students at risk of school failure, and the number of teaching vacancies needing to be filled.

The evidence base is quite strong, with two randomized trials and multiple non-experimental studies. One randomized trial covers high school math, and the other covers elementary schools. The non-experimental studies include other grades.

Two of the non-experimental studies referenced found learning gains among populations broadly similar to the New Mexico population.

The applicant cites two experimental research studies that state the effectiveness of the Teach for America program in increasing student achievement in math.

The applicant provided a comprehensive Theory of Change and logic model frame that aligned resources, planned work and outputs with intended outcomes.

The interventions were based on a strong review of the literature. Interventions were shown to be effective in achieving intended outcomes and long-term goals.

The applicant notes years of successful performance, as measured by elementary and secondary teachers both averaging at least 1.4 years of student growth in a single year. Additionally, principals are satisfied with the performance of Teach for America (TFA) teachers.

The applicant achieved all program measures during the 2012-2013 school year.

Approximately 79% of students who participated in this program in 2012-2013 attained at least one year of grade growth based on end-of-course assessments.

Past evaluations have shown impact as well as the use of formative evaluative information for making improvements and for reporting results.

#### Weaknesses:

The only grade level reading scores mentioned at the local level is grade 3. The applicant does not make clear whether the problem exists for all grades, which is important given that the intervention is designed across all grades.

There is a lack of district-specific data on student achievement levels.

The applicant reports the teaching vacancies located in the targeted regions, but does not illustrate how these vacancies lead to low student achievement.

The applicant fails to describe the age or grade-levels of students they wish to target with this program and the specific needs of this target population.

The Theory of Change does not sufficiently discuss how teachers will help students achieve the learning goals specified in the application. The logic model is primarily focused on the outcomes for Teach for America teachers, not for students, even though that is one of the key outcomes mentioned in the body of evidence.

The applicant focuses the Theory of Change and logic model on how to successfully recruit, train, and provide professional development to teachers versus how the proposed activities will increase student academic achievement.

None of the studies referenced mention statistically significant learning gains, even though the point estimates are provided.

The details of the cited research studies were inadequate; no information was provided regarding methodology, statistical significance of results, or similarities between the proposed program and the program being evaluated.

The applicant did not indicate any statistically significant information to support causal relationships between the intervention and intended outcomes.

While the applicant mentions the average growth of Teach for America teachers' students, it is unclear whether this is statistically different from other New Mexico teachers who serve similar populations of students.

The applicant does not describe academic achievement of participating students from all three years of their previous grant.

The applicant fails to describe their plan for improvement for the performance targets missed in the first two years of their previously funded program.